



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director Development Review & Historic Preservation

DATE: February 15, 2010

SUBJECT: Case No. 03-02A: Request filed by Holland & Knight LLP for campus plan amendment and a special exception for further processing for Gallaudet University, 800 Florida Avenue, N.E.

APPLICATION

Gallaudet University seeks approval of:

- A Campus Plan Amendment to re-designate Denison House from administrative to residential use; and
- Further processing to convert Denison House from administrative to residential use.

This report contains the Office of Planning analysis for the campus plan amendment and the further processing request.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends **APPROVAL** of the application.

AREA AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	800 Florida Avenue, N.E.
Legal Description	Parcel 149/69
Ward	5
Existing Development	Gallaudet University and the Kendall Demonstration Elementary School for grade school children
Zoning	R-4: row dwellings, conversions and apartments (majority of campus) C-M-1: low bulk commercial-light manufacturing (6 th Street area)
Adjacent Properties	North: Residential and industrial uses South & East: Across Florida and West Virginia avenues, residential row house neighborhoods West: Florida Avenue Market
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	Mixture of residential, commercial and university uses.

BACKGROUND

Zoning Commission Order No. 03-02 approved the Gallaudet University Facilities Master Plan, 2002-2012 on August 26, 2003.



The first further processing application, Zoning Commission Order 06-16, was for the construction of the Sorenson Language and Communication Center. That order became effective June 15, 2006 and the building was constructed.

This map illustrates the Gallaudet University Historic District, which is shaded in gray. The district is bounded by New York Avenue to the north, Penn Street NE to the east, and 14th Street NE to the south. Key streets shown include New York Avenue, Penn Street NE, 14th Street NE, 15th Street NE, 16th Street NE, 17th Street NE, 18th Street NE, 19th Street NE, 20th Street NE, 21st Street NE, 22nd Street NE, 23rd Street NE, 24th Street NE, 25th Street NE, 26th Street NE, 27th Street NE, 28th Street NE, 29th Street NE, 30th Street NE, 31st Street NE, 32nd Street NE, 33rd Street NE, 34th Street NE, 35th Street NE, 36th Street NE, 37th Street NE, 38th Street NE, 39th Street NE, 40th Street NE, 41st Street NE, 42nd Street NE, 43rd Street NE, 44th Street NE, 45th Street NE, 46th Street NE, 47th Street NE, 48th Street NE, 49th Street NE, 50th Street NE, 51st Street NE, 52nd Street NE, 53rd Street NE, 54th Street NE, 55th Street NE, 56th Street NE, 57th Street NE, 58th Street NE, 59th Street NE, 60th Street NE, 61st Street NE, 62nd Street NE, 63rd Street NE, 64th Street NE, 65th Street NE, 66th Street NE, 67th Street NE, 68th Street NE, 69th Street NE, 70th Street NE, 71st Street NE, 72nd Street NE, 73rd Street NE, 74th Street NE, 75th Street NE, 76th Street NE, 77th Street NE, 78th Street NE, 79th Street NE, 80th Street NE, 81st Street NE, 82nd Street NE, 83rd Street NE, 84th Street NE, 85th Street NE, 86th Street NE, 87th Street NE, 88th Street NE, 89th Street NE, 90th Street NE, 91st Street NE, 92nd Street NE, 93rd Street NE, 94th Street NE, 95th Street NE, 96th Street NE, 97th Street NE, 98th Street NE, 99th Street NE, 100th Street NE. Other landmarks include the Denison House, located at the intersection of New York Avenue and Penn Street NE, and the Gallaudet University, located at the intersection of New York Avenue and Penn Street NE. The map also shows various streets such as New York Avenue, Penn Street NE, 14th Street NE, 15th Street NE, 16th Street NE, 17th Street NE, 18th Street NE, 19th Street NE, 20th Street NE, 21st Street NE, 22nd Street NE, 23rd Street NE, 24th Street NE, 25th Street NE, 26th Street NE, 27th Street NE, 28th Street NE, 29th Street NE, 30th Street NE, 31st Street NE, 32nd Street NE, 33rd Street NE, 34th Street NE, 35th Street NE, 36th Street NE, 37th Street NE, 38th Street NE, 39th Street NE, 40th Street NE, 41st Street NE, 42nd Street NE, 43rd Street NE, 44th Street NE, 45th Street NE, 46th Street NE, 47th Street NE, 48th Street NE, 49th Street NE, 50th Street NE, 51st Street NE, 52nd Street NE, 53rd Street NE, 54th Street NE, 55th Street NE, 56th Street NE, 57th Street NE, 58th Street NE, 59th Street NE, 60th Street NE, 61st Street NE, 62nd Street NE, 63rd Street NE, 64th Street NE, 65th Street NE, 66th Street NE, 67th Street NE, 68th Street NE, 69th Street NE, 70th Street NE, 71st Street NE, 72nd Street NE, 73rd Street NE, 74th Street NE, 75th Street NE, 76th Street NE, 77th Street NE, 78th Street NE, 79th Street NE, 80th Street NE, 81st Street NE, 82nd Street NE, 83rd Street NE, 84th Street NE, 85th Street NE, 86th Street NE, 87th Street NE, 88th Street NE, 89th Street NE, 90th Street NE, 91st Street NE, 92nd Street NE, 93rd Street NE, 94th Street NE, 95th Street NE, 96th Street NE, 97th Street NE, 98th Street NE, 99th Street NE, 100th Street NE.

Zoning and Vicinity Map

The applicant proposes a campus plan amendment to re-designate Denison House from administrative to residential use. The building was originally constructed as a faculty residence in 1875. It is currently used for administrative purposes, housing the offices of the Gallaudet Press. The offices of the Gallaudet Press would be relocated to College Hall, a building designated for administrative use, and Denison house renovated for residential use.

Denison Hall would be modified to house ten to twelve students and one faculty member. It would include sleeping quarters and common bathrooms for the students and a private room with a private bath for the faculty member. An elevator would be installed in the center of the building. Communal rooms for all residents of the house would include a kitchen and dining room, living room, work room, game room, cinema and laundry room. No expansion of the building is proposed and the renovations would have no effect on the total FAR of the campus.

The renovation would also include the addition of a kitchen and bathroom vents, and the replacement of the front door to one similar to the original. These changes would require review by the Historic Preservation Office because they affect the exterior of the building.

Conversion of the building to residential use would enable the university to embark on a program where a select group of ten to twelve honors students participate in a year-long program and would live in Denison House with a faculty member. The participants would be selected from the current student body and the faculty member from the existing faculty. This program would not have an effect on the total number of students or faculty.

The following amendments to the Campus Plan would be required to change the designation of Denison House to residential, and to include it in the list of buildings to be renovated.

- Page iv and Page 18: Add Denison House to list of buildings to be renovated.
- Page v, Appendix 4: Change designation of Denison House from “academic” to “residence.”
- Figure 3, Building & Land Use: Change designation of Denison House from “administrative” to “residential.”
- Figure 8, Proposed Campus Plan, Concept Development: Add Denison House to list of historic renovations under Zone 1- Historic.

ZONING REGULATIONS

Section 210 of the Zoning Regulations, Colleges and Universities, sets forth the criteria required for approval of university uses within residential zone districts.

210.1 *Use as a college or university that is an academic institution of higher learning, including a college or university hospital, dormitory, fraternity, or sorority house proposed to be located on the campus of a college or university, shall be permitted as a special exception in an R-1 District if approved by the Zoning Commission under § 3104, subject to the provisions of this section.*

The application proposes to continue the use of the subject property as a university on the campus of Gallaudet University within a residential zone district.

210.2 *Use as a college or university shall be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or other objectionable conditions.*

Use of the building to house ten to twelve students plus one faculty member should not result in objectionable conditions to neighboring property. The students that would live in the house would already be enrolled at the university, and the one faculty member an existing employee. Denison House is located on the west side of the campus, away from any residential

neighborhoods. To the east is a university parking garage, beyond which is an industrial area. It is also located within a part of the campus primarily used for administrative purposes.

- 210.3 *In R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5-A, and R-5-B Districts, the maximum bulk requirements normally applicable in the districts may be increased for specific buildings or structures; provided, that the total bulk of all buildings and structures on the campus shall not exceed the gross floor area prescribed for the R-5-B District. In all other Residence Districts, similar bulk increases may also be permitted; provided, that the total bulk of all buildings and structures on the campus shall not exceed the gross floor area prescribed for the R-5-D District. Because of permissive increases as applicable to normal bulk requirements in the low-density districts regulated by this title, it is the intent of this subsection to prevent unreasonable campus expansion into improved low-density districts.*

The subject application proposes no new buildings, but rather the change in use of an existing building. It would have no effect on any of the bulk requirements, including FAR. The FAR would remain at 0.44, which is less than the maximum 0.46 permitted by the Campus Plan.

- 210.4 *As a prerequisite to requesting a special exception for each college or university use, the applicant shall have submitted to the Commission for its approval a plan for developing the campus as a whole, showing the location, height, and bulk, where appropriate, of all present and proposed improvements, including but not limited to the following:*

(a) Buildings and parking and loading facilities;

(b) Screening, signs, streets, and public utility facilities;

(c) Athletic and other recreational facilities; and

(d) A description of all activities conducted or to be conducted on the campus, and of the capacity of all present and proposed campus development.

Gallaudet University has a campus plan that was approved by the Commission for developing the campus as a whole. That plan expires on August 26, 2013. The subject application includes a minor amendment to that plan to change the use of one building from administrative to residential. It would not result in an increase in the number of students, faculty or staff, FAR or affect the location, height or bulk of any building. It would allow for the establishment of a new honors program on the campus.

- 210.5 *Within a reasonable distance of the college or university campus, and subject to compliance with § 210.2, the Commission may also permit the interim use of land or improved property with any use that the Commission may determine is a proper college or university function.*

The subject application does not propose interim use of land located off-campus.

- 210.6 *When a major new building that has been proposed in a campus plan is instead moved off-campus, the previously designated site shall not be designated for, or devoted to, a different major new building unless the Commission has approved an amendment to the campus plan applicable to the site; provided, that for this purpose a major new building is defined as one specifically identified in the campus plan.*

No major new buildings are proposed to be moved off-campus as a result of this application.

- 210.7 *In reviewing and deciding a campus plan application or new building construction pursuant to a campus plan, the Commission shall consider, to the extent they are relevant, the policies of the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan.*

Comprehensive Plan policies relevant to the subject application are discussed below within the Comprehensive Plan section of this report.

- 210.8 *As an integral part of the application requesting approval of new building construction pursuant to a campus plan, the college or university shall certify and document that the proposed building or amendment is within the floor area ratio (FAR) limit for the campus as a whole, based upon the computation included in the most recently approved campus plan and the FARs of any other buildings constructed or demolished since the campus plan was approved.*

No additional FAR would result from the approval of this application. The last further processing application increased the overall FAR of the campus to 0.44, less than the maximum 0.46 permitted by the Campus Plan.

- 210.9 *Before taking final action on an application for use as a college or university, the Commission shall submit the application to the D.C. Office of Planning and the D.C. Department of Transportation for review and written reports.*

The subject application was referred to the Office of Planning and the Department of Transportation for review and written reports. No response was received from the Department of Transportation.

The subject application is in conformance with the provisions of the § 210.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The subject application will contribute toward achieving many of the policies Land Use, Housing and Educational citywide elements, and the Upper Northeast area element of the Comprehensive Plan, as documented below.

Policy EDU-3.2.2: Corporate Citizenship

Support continued “corporate citizenship” among the city’s large institutions, including its colleges, **universities**, hospitals, private schools, and non-profits. This should include a continued commitment to high quality architecture and design on local campuses, expanded use of “green building” methods and low impact development, and **the adaptive reuse and preservation of historic buildings**.

Policy UNE-1.2.2: Protecting Local Historic Resources

Protect historic resources in Upper Northeast, including **Gallaudet University**, the Brooks Mansion, Crummell School, the homes of Ralph Bunche and Samuel Gompers, the Franciscan Monastery, Langston Terrace housing project, Langston Golf Course, the Hospital for Sick Children, Glenwood Cemetery, and the Fort Circle Parks.

Policy H-1.3.5: Student Housing

Require colleges and universities to address the housing needs of their students, and promote the use of such housing by their students.

Policy LU-3.2.2: Corporate Citizenship

Support continued “corporate citizenship” ***among the city’s large institutions, including its colleges, universities, hospitals, private schools, and non-profits.*** Given the large land area occupied by these uses and their prominence in the community, the city’s institutions (along with the District itself) should be encouraged to be role models for smaller employers in efforts to improve the city’s physical environment. This should include a continued commitment to high quality architecture and design on local campuses, expanded use of “green building” methods and low impact development, and ***the adaptive reuse and preservation of historic buildings.***

Policy LU-3.2.3: Non-Profits, Private Schools, and Service Organizations

Ensure that large non-profits, service organizations, private schools, seminaries, colleges and universities, and other institutional uses ***that occupy large sites within residential areas are planned, designed, and managed in a way that minimizes objectionable impacts on adjacent communities.*** The zoning regulations should ensure that the expansion of these uses is not permitted if the quality of life in adjacent residential areas is significantly adversely affected.

The subject application would adaptively re-use and preserve a historic building to provide for on-campus housing at Gallaudet University, without adversely affecting the surrounding residential neighborhood.

AGENCY COMMENTS

Comments were solicited from the following agencies:

Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department
District Department of the Environment
Department of Public Works
Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs
District Department of Transportation

The Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department, in a memorandum dated January 31, 2010, indicated that it had no objection to the application as long as all construction is in compliance with the International Fire Code (2006 Edition) and all applicable DC Laws.

No other comments were received.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The applicant informed the Office of Planning that:

- ANC 5B, the ANC in which the University is located, reviewed the application at their meeting of January 21, 2010 and voted to support the application.
- ANC 6A Economic Development and Zoning Committee reviewed the application at their meeting of January 20, 2010 and voted to support the application.
- ANC 6C Planning, Zoning and Environment Committee reviewed the application at their meeting of February 3, 2010 and voted to support the application.

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends that the Campus Plan be amended to change the use of Denison House from administrative to residential use. The Office of Planning also recommends approval of the further processing request to renovate Denison House into a residential space to accommodate an honors program for ten to twelve students and one faculty member. Both requests have been found by the Office of Planning to be consistent with the provisions of Section 210 of the Zoning Regulations.

Therefore, the Office of Planning recommends that the application be **APPROVED** as submitted by the applicant.

JS/sjm^{AICP}

Project Manager: Stephen J. Mordfin, AICP